

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, October 19, 2012**

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## **Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott**

### **1. Regents request full support for Funding Formula in Fiscal Year 2014 budget**

Yesterday, the Board of Regents approved a Fiscal Year 2014 budget request to transmit to Governor Chafee for his consideration. In keeping with our long-standing commitment to provide LEAs with the resources and support needed to fulfill the requirements of our Basic Education Program and

to meet the goals of our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*, the Regents' budget request calls for full funding of Year 3 of the Funding Formula for education aid.

The Regents have requested a total of \$724.2 million in education aid, which includes full funding of the categorical aid components of the funding formula: \$3.3 million for transportation, \$2.45 million for early-childhood education, \$1 million for high-cost special education, and \$3.5 million for career-technical education. The overall request for state aid amounts to an increase of \$27.7 million (3.7 percent) in distributed aid and \$2.6 million (0.4 percent) in categorical aid. The Regents have also requested an additional \$700,000 for e-rate to support our work toward expanding bandwidth for wireless Internet access in all classrooms. The Budget request maintains support for all current RIDE operations.

The total for state expenditures would be \$966.6 million, which falls \$1.6 million below the target that the Budget Office set for RIDE, thanks largely to anticipated savings in Housing Aid (school construction) of \$4.2 million.

## **2. Providence Mayor's Children and Youth Cabinet receives national award**

On Monday (October 15), we received word that the U.S. Department of Education and the Corporation for National and Community Service have chosen Providence Mayor Angel Taveras's Children and Youth Cabinet as one of only 24 organizations in the country to win the Together for Tomorrow Challenge, which honors successful partnerships between schools and community groups. As we work together to transform education in Rhode Island, all of us at

RIDE share with Mayor Taveras a commitment to ensuring that the children and youth in Providence have access to high-quality public education that will prepare them for college and for challenging careers. Partnerships between city officials, educators, community organizations, and other stakeholders are essential to building understanding of and support for public education. The Mayor's Children and Youth Cabinet has been a powerful advocate on behalf of public education, and we look forward to continuing our work with the Mayor, with Superintendent Susan Lusi, and with all Providence educators on behalf of the children and youth of Providence.

### **3. Regent Guida to head National Association of State Boards of Education**

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), formally announced today (Friday) that Patrick A. Guida, vice-chairman of the Board of Regents, will begin his term as president of NASBE in January. Regent Guida has served throughout the current year at the president-elect of the association. His selection as NASBE president recognizes the excellent work he has done as a national leader in developing education policy at the state and local level, and it is also a tribute to the Board of Regents, recognizing their role in making Rhode Island a leading state when it comes to transforming education.

### **4. Rhode Island named an Honor Roll State for policies on asthma and allergy-prevention in schools**

Rhode Island is one of seven states (plus the District of Columbia) to be named by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America as an Honor Roll State, one of the

states with the most comprehensive and best policies on asthma prevention and treatment of food allergies in schools. The Foundation notes that Rhode Island meets 16 of their 18 “core policy standards” and 10 of 15 “extra-credit” indicators. We should be very proud that we are a state that is leading the way when it comes to policies and practices that ensure safe and healthy learning environments for staff and students.

You can read the notice of the award here:

<http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=5&sub=105&cont=649>

## **5. RIDE responds to concerns about educator evaluations**

Several RIDE staff members attended the RIASP meeting on Wednesday and responded to questions and concerns that the principals raised about some elements of the EPSS and the process of evaluations. We sent the principals this message following the meeting:

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to meet with those of you who were able to be part of the RIASP meeting yesterday. We appreciated our candid and solutions-oriented conversation about Educator Evaluation and the EPSS. Please know that we heard you and will continue to work in partnership with RIASP and you, individually as needed. Never hesitate to pick up the phone and call us.

During the meeting we talked about some of the issues that you and your staff are facing when using the EPSS. In fact, we called the president of the company

during the meeting to get updates on the solutions her team were implementing throughout the night. As promised, this email is to give you a brief update. This does not replace the typical way we communicate about any of our technology platforms which is the RIDEmap home page. However, in light of our meeting and knowing that many of you planned professional development today we wanted to get the message out to you.

The EPSS problems have been addressed. Our contractor conducted tests throughout last night to make sure that it could handle a large load of users. It appears to be working fine. However, if you have a problem please let us know immediately.

We know that implement a great evaluation system is a difficult process, and we appreciate your commitment to this work. We are continuously working to improve our data systems and to respond to concerns that educators in the field bring to our attention. I believe we are moving forward toward full implementation of evaluations across the state this year.

**From RIDE**

***Race to the Top***

**6. RIDE accepting Race to the Top budget amendments through October 31**

RIDE is accepting budget amendments for the Race to the Top (RTTT) application. Amendments should incorporate proposed program activities through Year 4 of the grant. The RTTT project period ends September 23, 2014. Amendment

submissions are due to RIDE by **October 31**, 2012. For any fiscal questions, please contact David Alves, at 222-4271 or [david.alves@ride.ri.gov](mailto:david.alves@ride.ri.gov).

## ***Diploma System***

### **7. RIDE posts FAQs about testing requirements and the diploma system**

RIDE has posted a new FAQ document that provides information about our NECAP-test component of our graduation requirements and about the opportunities for retests that are part of our Diploma System. The FAQs provide specific information about how NECAP testing requirements and opportunities affect students with disabilities and English-language learners. These FAQs are posted at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/Secondary/documents/Regulation/2012/NECAP\\_clarification\\_101912.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/Secondary/documents/Regulation/2012/NECAP_clarification_101912.pdf).

Please visit the RIDE website for more information and details about the graduation requirements:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/default.aspx>.

## **From other state agencies**

### **8. R.I. Center for the Book invites students to enter *Letters About Literature* challenge**

Rhode Island students in grades 4 – 10 are invited to take the *Letters About Literature* challenge by writing a personal letter to an admired author - someone who has written a

book that has been an inspiration for change in their lives. The deadline for this contest is **January 11, 2013**.

By encouraging personal reader response and reflective writing, *Letters About Literature* supports meaningful reading and helps to create and celebrate successful writers. Teachers and librarians can download the directions for entering and the guidelines from the website:

[www.lettersaboutliterature.org](http://www.lettersaboutliterature.org).

Teaching materials, including lessons plans, writing samples, and assessment checklists, are also available at this site. *Letters About Literature* supports national standards for teaching language arts and reading, as recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association. Teachers can also successfully adapt *Letters About Literature's* contest theme and writing requirements to meet Common Core State Standards for composing argument texts.

*Letters About Literature* awards prizes on both the state and national levels. Each state center has a panel of judges who select the top essayists in the state. State winners at each level of competition (Level 1: grades 4 – 6; Level 2: grades 7 -8; Level 3: grades 9 -10) will receive a \$50 cash award and additional prizes and will advance to the National-level judging.

A panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select three (3) National winners and 3 second-place winners at each level of competition. The national winners will receive a \$1,000 cash award; second-place winners will receive \$150 cash award.



*Letters About Literature – 2013* is a project of the Rhode Island Center for the Book at R.I. Council for the Humanities. Through a variety of programs and events, the Center promotes a passion for books among readers of all ages and backgrounds across Rhode Island. The Library of Congress Center for the Book was established in 1977 as a public-private partnership to use the resources of the Library of Congress to stimulate public interest in books and reading. For information about its activities and national reading-promotion networks, see:

<http://www.read.gov/cfb> .

### **From the U.S. Department of Education**

#### **9. Department schedules webinar on FERPA**

On **Wednesday** (October 24), at 2 p.m., the Department's Family Policy Compliance Office will present via webinar a basic overview of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA). his one-hour presentation will be geared toward local school officials. To register, to go:

<https://educateevents1.webex.com/educateevents1/onsstage/g.php?t=a&d=748074727>.

### **From other organizations**

#### **10. Principals Institute seeks nominations for School Change Awards**

The National Principals Leadership Institute is now accepting nomination for the 2013 National School Change Awards.,

which recognize schools that have significantly changed for the better. The deadline is March 11, 2013. Applications and more information are available at:

[www.npli.org/nsca](http://www.npli.org/nsca)

Inquiries about the award may be directed to Jason Benjamin, at [jbenjamin@npli.org](mailto:jbenjamin@npli.org), or (646) 233-2941.

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>